

# Struggling to Survive

Category: Uncertainty

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | August 2, 2020

Even as a child, I realized that the only constant in life was change. That recognition brought me angst, resulting in many panic attacks. I am a person who likes routine. I am a person who likes to know what tomorrow will bring.

Now, at almost age 73, I find myself drowning in a world of uncertainty. Will tomorrow infect me with COVID-19? Will my adult children, one in Manhattan and the other in British Columbia, become ill? A few weeks ago, the university where I have been a part-time writing teacher for sixteen years emailed me to say that I was being temporarily let go due to lower enrollment rates. This led to another uncertainty I must face: Will I ever again teach – something I have done my entire adult life? I have tickets for both the local Broadway Series and Cabaret, but a recent email from the Cultural Trust has left me feeling uncertain about when – or if – the currently dark stages will once again be bright.

Living in a constant state of not knowing has taken a physical and emotional toll on me. Either my stomach growls with hunger – I eat junk food when depressed or anxious – or it aches as if I have done too many sit-ups (I have not done any). Pain attacks my neck, back, and arms; when the pain in my left arm and fingers intensified early last night, I called my physician's answering service. The on-call doctor immediately responded to my call; through patience and a calm voice, he convinced me that stress, not my heart, lay at the root of my discomfort.

Uncertainty has convinced me that I will never see my children again. I usually travel via Megabus to my daughter in New York City, but I fear sitting on a bus with other passengers – and wearing a mask – for the eight-hour trip. I want to see my son, but I fear flying across the country to do so. I want a return to what was, but I have lost hope that the world will ever again be rooted in "normalcy."

I have no certainty that the pandemic will end, that social unrest will lead to equality, that the United States will once more be a country in which education and culture thrive.

My only certainty lies in my awareness of uncertainty. In this world of uncertainty, I struggle to survive.

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